



Sabres prospects face tough times
Premature end to season means they lost playing time, money. | PAGE B1

THE BUFFALO NEWS

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Tests lacking but more hospital beds on the way as region fights Covid-19



Reflecting Covid-19's impact on the region, one car leaves downtown Thursday on what normally would be a crowded Kensington Expressway.

Coronavirus may radically change life in the U.S.

BY WILLIAM WAN, JOEL ACHENBACH, CAROLYN Y. JOHNSON AND BEN GUARINO
WASHINGTON POST

When Jason Christie, chief of pulmonary medicine at Penn Medicine, got projections on how many novel coronavirus patients might soon be flocking to his Philadelphia hospital, he said he felt physically ill.

"My front-line providers - we were speaking about it in the situation report that night, and their voices cracked," Christie said on Wednesday. They saw how quickly the surge would overwhelm the system, forcing doctors to make impossible choices - which patients would get ventilators and beds, and which would die.

"They were terrified," Christie said. "And that was the best-case scenario."

Experts around the country have been churning out model after model - marshaling every tool from math, medicine, science and history - to try to predict the coming chaos unleashed by the new coronavirus and to make preparations.

See **Projections** on Page A5

Related coverage

- **Eyes on the prize:** The race to find a vaccine for Covid-19 also will give the winner the upper hand. *Page A6*
- **We were warned:** Three times in four years the U.S. has dealt with epidemics. Now it fights a pandemic. *Page A6*

WNY totals

Although the numbers are subject to change, officials tracked down the first cases.

36

Number of people tested positive

• Erie County	29
• Niagara County	4
• Allegany County	2
• Wyoming County	1

Where those infected with virus have been

Erie County has issued daily public advisories providing places where individuals who have tested positive for Covid-19 were in recent weeks. The Erie County Department of Health advises any individuals who were present at the following places and times to monitor themselves daily for symptoms of Covid-19:

March 16:

Tops Markets, 2351 Maple Road, Amherst; 12:40 to 1 p.m.

March 16:

Target on Niagara Falls Blvd., Amherst; 3 p.m.

March 15:

Walmart on Niagara Falls Boulevard, Amherst; 1 p.m.

March 15:

CVS on Main Street, East Aurora; midday.

March 15:

Orangetheory Fitness on McKinley Parkway; 11:30 a.m.

March 14:

Tops Markets, 5274 Main St., Amherst; 2:45 to 3:15 p.m.

March 14:

Premier Liquor, 3900 Maple Road, Amherst.

March 14:

Wegmans, Blasdel; 3 to 3:30 p.m.

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Poloncarz calls shortage of test kits 'distressing'

BY SANDRA TAN
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

Erie County leaders have been frantic in their attempts to lay their hands on the material needed to conduct more Covid-19 tests.

They've repeatedly called the Governor's Office and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. They've appealed to members of Congress. They've waited on hold for as long as four hours to plead directly with suppliers.

"We are begging, borrowing and stealing them," said Benjamin Swanekamp, the county's deputy budget director and former Health Department policy director.

Testing material has been provided in spurts, but not enough to sustain the county Health Department effort to monitor community spread of the coronavirus disease even though Erie County is the largest county outside the New York City region and has been conducting tests for counties in Western New York.

The lack of testing materials caught Erie County off guard. Two days ago, the county was rapidly going through its initial supply of 450 test kits at the same time it was announcing the loosening of restrictions on who could be tested and quietly setting up a drive-thru specimen collection site for an influx of patients at Twin District Firehall in Lancaster.

The original intent was to

See **Testing** on Page A7

St. Joseph Campus hospital to become first in New York dedicated to coronavirus care

BY MARK SOMMER
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

The St. Joseph Campus for Sisters of Charity Hospital is being converted to care for novel coronavirus patients, which would make it the first hospital in New York State dedicated to treating the coronavirus, said Mark Sullivan, president and CEO of Catholic Health.

It is expected to be available for patients soon, Sullivan said Thursday.



James P. McCoy/Bufallo News

The St. Joseph Campus hospital is expected to be available soon for Covid-19 patients.

Tesla shuts down most operations as economic toll grows

BY MAKI BECKER
NEWS STAFF REPORTER

The coronavirus has spread everywhere, Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz acknowledged Thursday.

But the county has so little testing material left that health officials are conserving the tests for high-priority cases.

And there's no telling when more testing materials will be available.

County officials shared their frustrations over the shortage as the number of confirmed cases of Covid-19 ticked upward across Western New York.

Poloncarz blamed the federal government for not being prepared for a pandemic. "It's not like Erie County is dropping the ball," Poloncarz said. "No one is handing the ball to us. They're not even giving us the ball."

But there were troubling questions about the tests, as a second patient told The Buffalo News that she was told her test was negative, before being told later that, in fact, it was positive. (PAGE C1)

The economic toll continued, affecting the giant corporations and small mom-and-pops.

Tesla joined other major automakers in announcing it was shutting down most operations, including at its Buffalo solar plant. (PAGE A3)

And Paula's Donuts announced it was closing until further notice.

Still, the region made a giant stride Thursday in its fight against the pandemic: Catholic Health announced that its St. Joseph Campus is being converted to care for coronavirus patients. (PAGE C1)

Fear of the virus has changed so many facets of our lives.

Volunteer drivers for Feed-More WNY continued to deliver hot meals to seniors, but used new social distancing rules. (PAGE C1)

It's even changed how we grieve.

Mourners and funeral home directors have had to rethink funerals. Some are being limited to a graveside service with immediate family only. (PAGE C1)

"Part of the piece of the puzzle of grief is compassion," said Timothy J. Gardner, who runs F.E. Brown Sons Funeral Home in Orchard Park.

"Compassion is hugging, kisses, shaking hands and assuring people that everything's going to be OK."